

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR  
VIRGINIA CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT STRIKE  
TEAMS  
edition 1.2  
24 October 2000**

**REFERENCES:**

**Virginia Emergency Services and Disaster Law of 1973, as Amended**  
(Title 44, Chapter 3.2, Code of Virginia).

**Virginia State Government Volunteers Act** (2.1-554 through 2.1-558,  
Code of Virginia).

Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan, Executive Order  
Seventy Three (97).

- 1. ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL:** The standard National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Incident Command System (ICS) establishes three types of resources: Single Resources, Task Forces, and Strike Teams. A Strike Team is defined as several of the same type of Single Resource under the leadership of a single Unit Leader. We have adopted a Strike Team model for this concept because (1) the NWCG ICS model has been used for large scale incident management for years in Virginia and because (2) Strike Teams are a standard resource component in response under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, the method Virginia uses to deploy resources to other states.
- 2. OBJECTIVE:** Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Strike Teams will provide standard resource packages for deployment outside their home region in response to critical incident stress management needs in States of Emergency declared by the Governor.
- 3. COMPOSITION:** Each Strike Team will be composed of
  - a. **Personnel:** 5 state qualified CISM personnel. *Each team will consist of one CISM mental health clinician and four CISM Emergency Services peers. One of the team members will be designated as a CISM Team Leader and one will be designated as an Intervention Coordinator. CISM Team Leader and Intervention Coordinator responsibilities are listed in section 7 of this SOP. Strike Team members who are enrolled on a formal basis in a Strike Team, attend training, and participate in exercises and drills are considered Regular Service*

Volunteers of the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services under the provisions of the Virginia State Government Volunteers Act. Each individual must complete a *CISM Strike Team Application and an ESF-8 Team Member Application (Attachment 4)*, and this form must be on file at the Office of Emergency Medical Services.

b. **Strike Team Leaders:** *Strike Team Leaders will be appointed, in writing by the Director of the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services or persons designated by the Director. Strike Team Leaders have command authority over personnel and resources assigned to their Strike Team and are responsible for the safety, performance, and discipline of their personnel and the accomplishment of the missions assigned to the Strike Team. Each Strike Team should have at least *three* members qualified as Leader.*

c. **Vehicles:** One or more vehicles capable of transporting the Strike Team to its assignment. Where possible, such vehicles should be clearly marked departmental vehicles. *Emergency vehicles are not recommended. OEMS may supply a vehicle when deemed necessary by the OEMS Emergency Operations Manager*

d. **Strength:** To ensure these resources will be available on a continuous basis, the membership of the Strike Team in vehicles, personnel, equipment, and agencies should be at least three deep where possible.

e. **Identification:** Individuals who are Strike Team Members or Leaders will be identified by a standard state issued picture identification card. In addition each individual will be issued with a Blue Card identifying mission specialty and ICS training level. *NOT IN EFFECT AT THIS TIME.*

**4. RECRUITING AND DESIGNATION:** CISM Strike Teams may be recruited and organized on an area basis (incorporating several regions), by EMS Regions, or by local jurisdictions. Strike Teams will be accepted for use by the OEMS through a Memorandum of Agreement. Strike Teams are numbered in sequence according to the order in which they are activated. Numbers of Strike Teams that do not complete organization or that are withdrawn from service will be reassigned to new Strike Teams.

**5. VOLUNTARY RESPONSE:** CISM Strike Teams offer their services and respond on a voluntary basis to requests for assistance coordinated through the Virginia Emergency Operations Center and the ESF-8 Emergency Support Center. Requests for response are not mandatory dispatches and should only be agreed to if local needs and conditions permit.

**6. STRIKE TEAM MISSIONS:** Strike Team roles will depend on the specific need. Conceptually, several missions can be defined:

- a. CISM support to deployed EMS Task Forces and Coordination Teams operating in a disaster area.
- b. Support to Regional CISM Teams in other parts of the Commonwealth that have been heavily tasked by a major disaster.
- c. Support to other states through deployment under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

**7. DEPLOYMENT:** Strike Teams respond to a disaster in an orderly sequence of steps. Strike Teams will be *deployed* primarily in extended large scale events that can be expected to continue for days, weeks, and months. This will allow for mobilization of the Strike Team and travel time, while still arriving in time to make a significant contribution to the stress management effort.

- a. **Notification:** On notification of a potential or actual disaster the Emergency Support Center will place at least one Strike Team on alert for response. As the situation and potential needs are clarified additional Strike Teams may be placed on alert.

- b. **Alert:**

- (1) **Alerting Roster:** All Strike Teams will complete and forward to the Office of Emergency Medical Services an *ESF-8 Team Sata sheet* at least once a quarter, or when there are changes (Attachment 10). Contact persons listed on the roster should be listed in the order of preference for contact. Strike Teams that have a published internal alerting roster may send a copy of that roster to the Office of EMS instead of the form as long as it includes the requested information.

- (2) **Alerting And Dispatch:** Alerts and dispatch will be a two step process.

- (a) The Emergency Support Center will directly notify *the Team designated dispatch center or* the Strike Team Leader of the emergency situation and place the Strike Team on the appropriate alert state using the standard EMS Task Force Alerting Format (Attachment 5).

- (b) On a decision to deploy the Strike Team the Emergency Support Center will contact the Strike Team Leader and dispatch the

Strike Team using the standard EMS Task Force Mission Tasking Format (Attachment 6).

(3) **Alerting Levels:** To provide an orderly process of activation and to allow agencies and personnel the most flexibility, Strike Teams will be placed on standard alerting levels. Alerting levels will provide orderly resource management by allowing Strike Teams to be activated and deployed when needed. During response it is probable that Strike Teams will be at different Alerting Levels based on the seriousness of the situation and the resource rotation plan. While individual emergency situations may require deviation from these levels, they will be used whenever possible.

(a) Warning: Onset of a disaster is possible and may require response by Strike Teams. This alert level will be used when a low level of alert is appropriate to increase awareness of a potential, but not yet defined, threat. Generally, warning will be issued whenever the Department of Emergency Services initiates augmented staffing of the Virginia Emergency Operations Center.

(b) 12 Hour Alert: A disaster event is occurring and there is a possibility the Strike Team may be required for disaster response. If a response is needed, at least 12 hours warning will be available prior to deployment. This Alert level allows Strike Teams to determine availability of members and vehicles. Individuals should start personal preparedness actions. It will be used when a slow onset disaster is in its early stages. For scheduled deployments to meet requirements that are identified substantially in advance of deployment this will be the only Alert State used.

(c) 6 Hour Alert: There is a possibility the Strike Team may be required for disaster response. If a response is needed, at least 6 hours warning will be available prior to deployment. At this Alert level Strike Teams initiate actions to be ready for deployment including checking personal kits and advising personnel to be ready for initiation of a callout. Normally this alert level will only be used for Strike Teams that will be deployed with EMS Task Forces.

(d) 3 Hour Alert: It is probable the Strike Team will be required for disaster response. If a response is ordered, at least 3 hours warning will be available prior to deployment. At this Alert level Strike Teams should have personnel on telephone standby and vehicles ready to move to an assembly point. Normally this alert level will only be used for Strike Teams that will be deployed with EMS Task Forces.

(e) 1 Hour Alert: The situation indicates a high probability that Strike Teams will be deployed to the disaster area. The Strike Team will have approximately one hour of warning when a potential mission tasking for the Strike Team is received and is being coordinated. The normal progression of alert will be from 3 Hour to Staged At Home. However, the 1 Hour Alert is included to provide additional flexibility in staging, especially if weather or other conditions justify delaying moving to a Staged At Home status. Normally this alert level will only be used for Strike Teams that will be deployed with EMS Task Forces.

(f) Staged At Home: Expect a mission tasking to be issued within the next 30 minutes. Strike Team vehicles and personnel should be concentrated at a preplanned assembly point. The assembly point should be in contact with the Emergency Support Center by telephone or radio. Vehicles should be fully loaded and fueled. Personnel should be with the vehicle or within 3 minutes of the station and in radio contact with the Strike Team Leader. The Strike Team should be ready to deploy within 5 minutes. When the Strike Team is ready for departure the Strike Team Leader will fax a list of personnel on duty to the Emergency Support Center. Normally this alert level will only be used for Strike Teams that will be deployed with EMS Task Forces.

(g) Released: Emergency response has been completed, no further taskings are anticipated, and the Strike Team may stand down and release its personnel and equipment for normal operations.

c. **Mission Tasking**: Assignment of movement to staging or deployment on a mission task will be done using the standard Virginia EMS Task Force Mission Tasking form (Attachment 6). This form will be completed by the staff of the Emergency Support Center and forwarded to the duty Strike Team Leader by:

(1) Fax. This is the preferred means of transmission.

(2) E-mail. This method may be used if the Strike Team has e-mail access and transmission is pre-coordinated.

(3) Telephone or Radio. When the tasking form is forwarded by voice means it can be transmitted in either of two ways.

(a) By line number - the individual passing the tasking will read the line number and the text that goes in the blank (for example, read Line 8, 22 March 0900).

(b) By topic - if the Strike Team Leader does not have access to a Mission Tasking form, tell the Emergency Support Center to pass the information by topic. The caller will then read the key words from the form along with the information in the blank (for example for line 8, read Time On Station, 22 March 0900).

e. **On Scene Command And Logistics Management When Operating With Task Forces:** Whenever possible a Coordination Team (C Team) will be deployed with one or more Task Forces and a Strike Team assigned to support a jurisdiction or operation. C Teams will, as specified in the C Team Standard Operating Procedure:

(1) Direct employment of the state health and medical resources operating in a specific jurisdiction, operating as a Division or Group Supervisor under the Incident Command System.

(2) Coordinate with and support the jurisdiction emergency medical services supervisor.

(3) Coordinate logistics support, including billeting, messing, and fuel, for deployed Strike Teams.

(4) Plan for Strike Team operations in the next operational period.

f. **Length Of Deployment:** Strike Teams will be deployed for 72 hours. If Strike Team personnel and vehicles can remain at the disaster area longer than 72 hours, and if the situation requires it, Strike Teams may be extended on deployment.

g. **Out-of-State/Out of Country Deployment:** Under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) assistance by Virginia resources may be requested by other states/countries. Strike Teams will provide the CISM response to EMAC requests. *All out of state/country deployments must be pre-authorized by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services. Responses that have not been pre-approved by DEM and OEMS will not be protected under the Virginia State Government Volunteers Act and is a direct violation of this SOP.* Because EMAC deployments are standardized as two week deployments, it may not be practical to deploy any given Strike Team as a unit. Under these conditions one or more composite Strike Teams may be assembled from Strike Team trained volunteers, under the command of a qualified Strike Team Leaders.



h. **Home Station Point Of Contact:** If possible as part of the alerting process, Strike Teams should designate an individual as a home station duty officer to serve as a point of contact for Strike Team matters once the Strike Team has deployed. This individual should be trained as a Strike Team Leader. The primary function of the duty officer will be to coordinate information flow to agencies and families of the deployed personnel, both from the Emergency Support Center and from deployed members.

i. **Safety and Accountability:**

(1) **Strike Team Leader Responsibilities:** Strike Team Leaders are command officers with:

(a) Authority to accept or reject specific taskings based on personnel training, experience, physical and psychological condition, vehicle capabilities, and assessment of risks and safety factors.

(b) Responsibility for accountability for and safety of assigned personnel. This includes accountability checks of personnel:

i. when vehicles are loaded and ready for movement.

ii. at the start of a specific task.

iii. at regular intervals during task performance. The specific interval will depend on the situation, but must be short enough to allow quick reaction if an individual is not accounted for.

iv. on conclusion of a specific task.

(2) **Employment As A Unit:** While Strike Teams are intended to supplement local CISM services, they will maintain unit integrity and operate as a unit under the Strike Team Leader. The Strike Team Leader retains command authority over assigned Strike Team members and is responsible for their safety and welfare.

(3) **Personnel and Vehicle Accountability Reporting:** A personnel accountability report (PAR) will be a standard component of all contacts with the Emergency Support Center. The PAR will include Strike Team name, number of personnel, and number of vehicles accounted for. The PAR is included in the standard Report Format.

j. **Rotation:** Additional Strike Teams will be rotated in as needed to relieve the initial units dispatched. Strike Teams identified for rotation will be given an arrival time for relief in the disaster area. The departing Strike Team will brief the relieving Strike Team on the situation, hazards, operations conducted, problems encountered, and local command relationships.

k. **Demobilization:** Demobilization of Strike Teams will be coordinated between the Emergency Support Center, the Coordination Team, the local jurisdiction, and the Strike Team Leader. On return to their home jurisdiction, the Strike Team Commander will confirm safe arrival with the Emergency Support Center.

l. **Time:** Local time will be the standard time used for operations, expressed in 24 hour clock time (for example, 6:00 am is 0600, 6:00 pm is 1800). Universal Coordinated Time will be used for messages transmitted by amateur radio.

m. **Standard Map:** The standard map will be the current edition of the ADC Virginia Map Book. References to locations may be by page and grid as used in that map.

8. **REPORTING:** Standard reports will be used to pass information from the Strike Teams to the Emergency Support Center using the Report Format (Attachment 7). Reports should be forwarded by any available means and may be modified if needed to use the message form for Amateur Radio transmission.

a. **Alerting Report** - when initial alerting of Strike Team resources has been completed and the Strike Team has achieved the alert status.

b. **Staged Report** - when the Strike Team has arrived either at home staging location or at a forward staging site and is ready for mission tasking. Attach to the report that the Strike Team is staged at home a list of names of personnel on duty.

c. **Departure Report** - when the Strike Team is actually departing on a mission tasking or is departing from the scene for return to home station.

d. **In Route Report** - during extended movements on a regular schedule established by the Emergency Support Center (normally every hour).

e. **On Scene Report** - when the Strike Team has arrived at the site of their assigned emergency mission.



f. **Daily Report** - an end of shift daily operations report for each day of mission task operations. Include with the daily report the following as activity report:

(1) Number of calls dispatched on.

(2) Any significant events, including accidents, injuries, or damage to equipment or personnel.

(3) Number of persons assisted.

g. **Closing Report** - on return of the Strike Team to home station.

## 9. TRAINING:

a. **CISM Strike Team Personnel:** All Strike Team members *shall* be appropriately trained *in the Virginia Basic CISM Training Course (ICISF certification preferred)* and certified for their duties. All Strike Teams members must complete a Strike Team Member Course (4 hours) within six months of their acceptance for membership on a Strike Team.

b. **Strike Team Leaders:** Persons serving as Strike Team *Leaders* will complete the Strike Team Member Course and the 8 hour Strike Team Leader Course.

**10. USE OF STRIKE TEAMS IN EXERCISES:** Strike Teams are encouraged to participate in local and regional disaster drills as a Strike Team. Participation options include:

a. As a complete Strike Team with a full complement of vehicles and personnel.

b. As a simulated Strike Team, with one person playing the Strike Team role for communications and resource exercises.

c. As individuals in the roles of observers or evaluators to gain insight into how other agencies conduct operations and to develop lessons learned that may impact Strike Team operations and training.

## 11. COMMUNICATIONS:

a. **Amateur Radio Communications:** Where possible Strike Teams are encouraged to have a licensed Amateur Radio operator who is a member of the

Amateur Radio Emergency Service as a Strike Team member. It is desirable that the Strike Team have as a minimum the ability to operate on 2 meter Amateur voice frequencies.

b. **Standard Message Forms:** The American Radio Relay League radio message form, in the format published for use by the Emergency Support Center, will be used as the standard message form for all record communications (Attachment 8).

**12. EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES:** Strike Teams may have to operate with minimum support for most of their time within the disaster area. Recommendations for individual personal equipment are attached (Attachment 3). The following additional supplies and equipment should be considered as additions to the normal stock carried on board the Strike Team's vehicles.

a. Spare flashlight and hand held radio batteries sufficient for at least 48 hours (preferably 72 hours).

b. A minor injury first aid kit with treatment materials to treat up to 5 people with minor cuts, abrasions, burns, and other minor injuries.

c. Packaged, dehydrated foods for Strike Team members for 72 hours.

d. Eating and cooking utensils, including camping pots and stoves.

e. Drinking water in canteens and jugs sufficient for 24 hours for each Strike Team member. Include a capability to purify water (filter, tablet, or boiling).

**13. COSTS:** The Virginia State Government Volunteers Act authorizes the Office of Emergency Medical Services to provide billeting and messing for Regular Service Volunteers. To the greatest extent possible this will be done by direct billing from vendors. In addition, where possible, the Emergency Support Center will arrange either access to state fuel points or direct billing for fueling and maintenance of vehicles. Actual costs incurred beyond these may be reimbursed from the sum sufficient or from Stafford Act funding for Strike Teams assigned on mission tasks through the Emergency Support Center. Requests for reimbursement should be coordinated with the *Emergency Operations manager* of the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services. *Receipts must be turned in to OEMS, Emergency Operations within 30 days of mission completion.* Do not expect reimbursement, when available, to be rapid. *Commercial billeting and messing may not be available due to disastrous events; therefore it is recommended that all ESF-8 teams be self sufficient for 72 hours.*

#### 14. **LIABILITY AND INSURANCE:**

a. **Individual Liability:** When dispatched at the direction of the Emergency Support Center, enrolled Strike Team members will be covered by the liability provisions of the Virginia Emergency Services and Disaster law of 1973 as amended and the Virginia State Government Volunteers Act.

b. **Vehicle Insurance:** Vehicles used by Strike Teams must be fully covered for emergency operations by either a self-insuring jurisdiction or agency or an insurance provider licensed to do business in the Commonwealth. Primary responsibility for vehicle claims shall rest with the participating agency's insurance. In the case of claims which are not fully covered by existing insurance, the supplemental provisions of the Commonwealth's self-insurance may apply when vehicles are being operated on a mission dispatched by the Emergency Support Center. *Personal vehicles shall not be used for deployments unless authorized by the Director of OEMS or designee. In such cases the owner of the vehicle is fully responsible for insurance coverage.*

c. **Workers Compensation:** Worker's Compensation coverage may be available for dispatches of volunteer Strike Teams under actual disaster conditions when these dispatches are directed by the Department of Emergency Services..

15. **UNIFORMS:** *The role of the CISM Team is to provide crisis intervention and support to individuals who have been involved in a critical incident, team members should be dressed as inconspicuous as possible.*

a. *The standard CISM Strike Team uniform will consist of dark pants (preferably blue) with a dark colored golf shirt with a small identifying logo (approval by OEMS required).*

b. *Protective clothing and equipment; agency (fire, rescue, police) uniforms; specially marked clothing and/or clothing with reflective lettering should be left in the vehicle and should not be worn to a debriefing.*

c. **Out of State Deployment:**

1. *Additional unmarked golf style shirts should be included to meet host state requirements.*
2. *Additional uniform requirements may be need, depending on the event and requesting jurisdictional request.*

**16. RECOGNITION:** Strike Team personnel are eligible to be awarded Virginia Health and Medical Emergency Response Team awards for disaster service and meritorious service. These awards include a metal citation bar for uniform wear. Eligibility criteria and procedures for recommendation and processing of these awards are specified in HMERT Standard Operating Procedures (Attachment 9). Strike Team Leaders are encouraged to promptly nominate deserving individuals for awards.